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THE TRANSFORMERS SPOTLIGHT



KUP



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Alex Milne

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KUP



THE TRANSFORMERS

SPOTLIGHT



KUP



He's faught Igyaks, fended off the Shrike-bats of Dromedon and remembers the day they inverted polarities, but how will the grizzled Autobot veteran Kup fare against this latest challenge—Zombots? Stranded on a desolate planet, alone and approaching shutdown fast, Kup fights off the hordes of evil and approaching insanity, but is everything as it seems...?



THE TRANSFORMERS: SPOTLIGHT KUP

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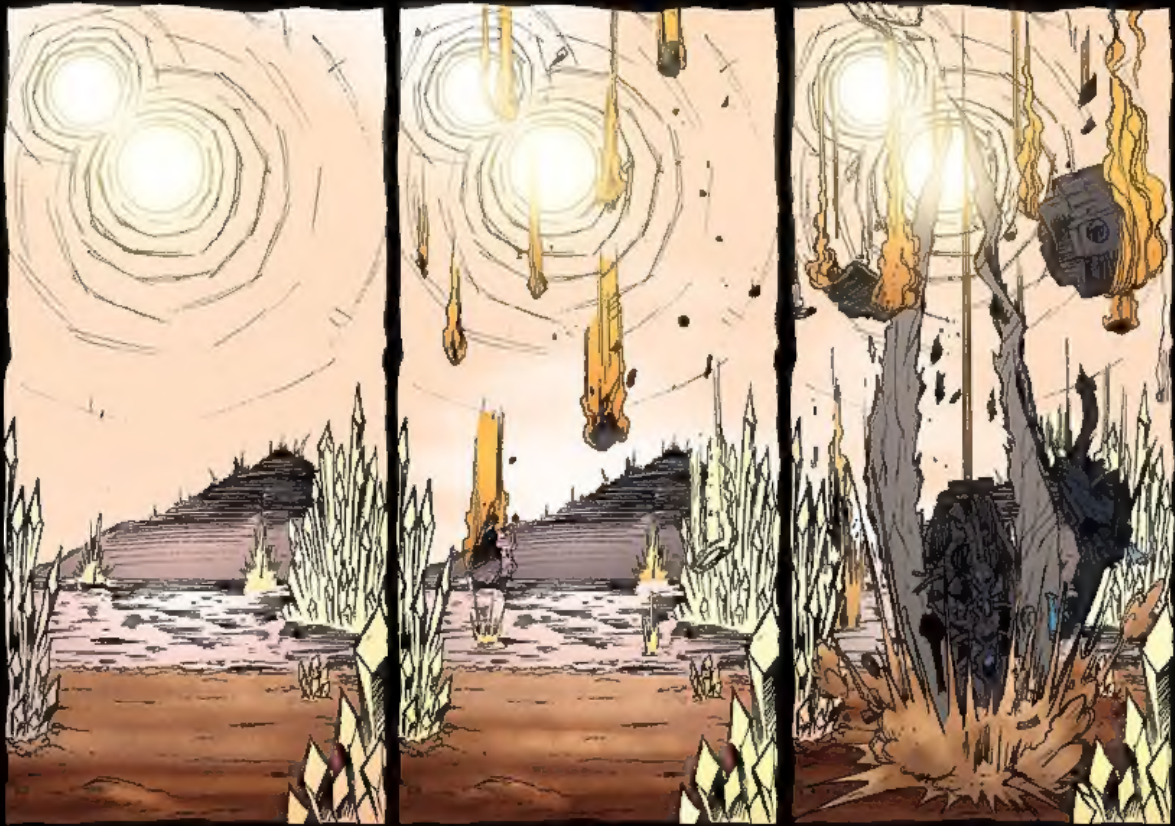
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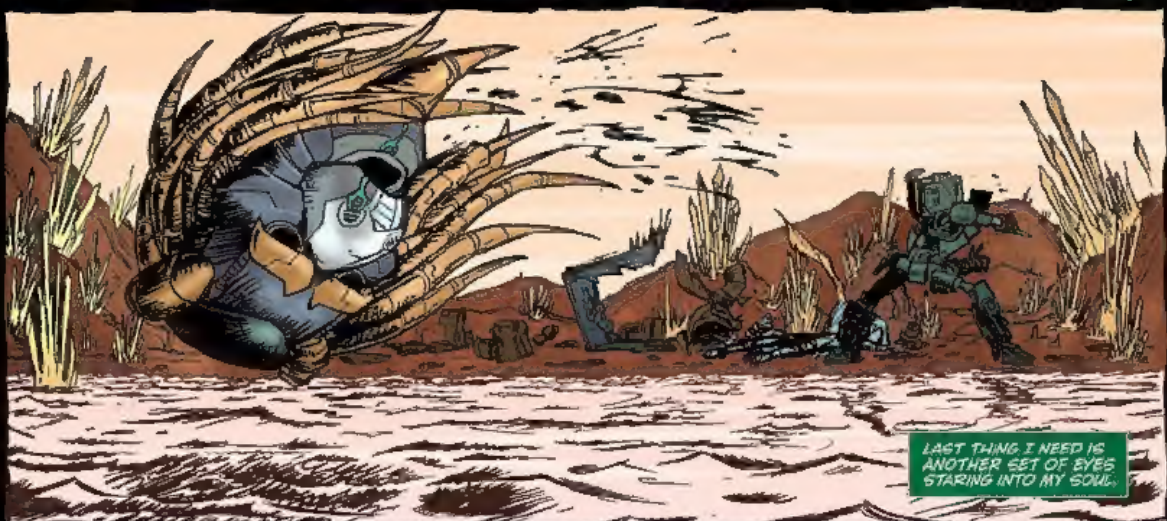
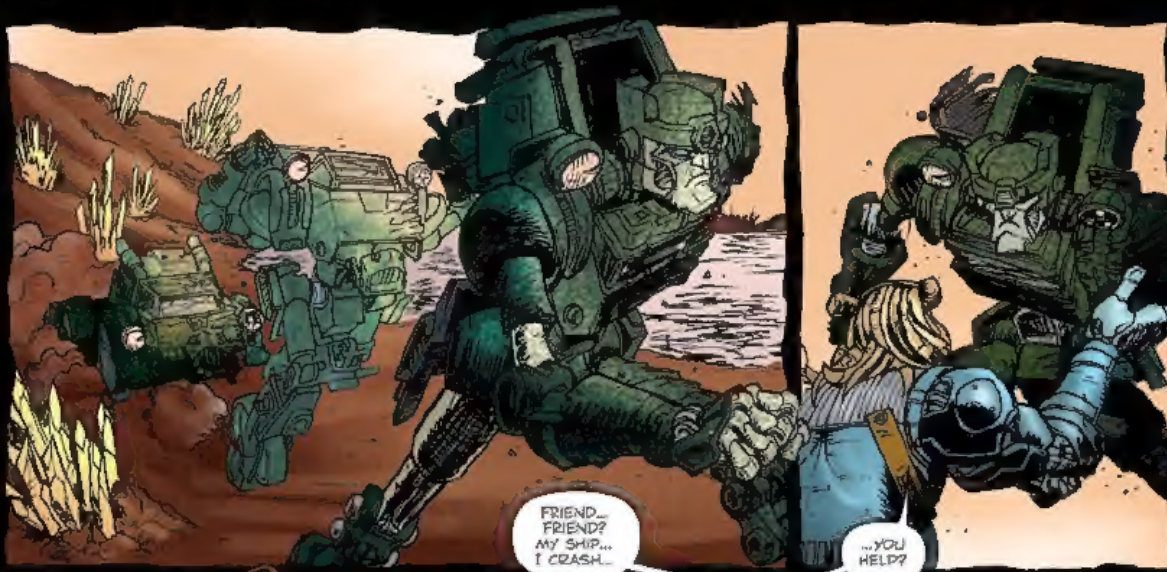
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ANOTHER DAY IN THIS PLACE. ANOTHER DAY IN THE LAND OF TWO SUNS. ANOTHER DAY AMONG THE CRYSTALS—MY CRYSTALS, SWEETLY SINGIN' THEIR TUNE TO ME.

CAN YOU HEAR IT? MAYBE YOU CAN'T. MAYBE THE MUSIC'S PRIVATE. MEANT FOR ME AND ME ONLY.

YEAH, I'D LIKE TO THINK THAT.

HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN HERE? I CAN'T ANSWER THAT. I MEAN—I'D LIKE TO, I REALLY WOULD. I'VE TRIED TO FIGGER IT OUT, BUT MY BRAIN JUST WANTS ME TO LISTEN TO THE CRYSTALS. AND I'M HAPPIER WITH THAT.

SIDES, ANY SENSE A' TIME I HAD DIED WHEN OUR HOPE OF RESCUE DID.

I'M OLD. REAL OLD. USETA BE THAT MY AGE WAS AGAINST ME, BUT NOT SINCE I GOT HERE. NOT SINCE OUR SHIP CRASHED N' SPLASHED IN THE SAME LAKE I TOSSED THAT INTERLOPER'S HEAD INTO...

WHO WAS HE? WHAT WAS HE? ONE A' THEM? MAYBE THEY'VE CHANGED APPEARANCES? OR MAYBE IT'S SOME NEW FIEND SENT TO TEST ME?

NAY. SOTTA BE ONE A' THEM. HAS TO BE.

THEY NEVER USED TO COME OUT IN THE DAY, THOUGH, WHEN THE SUNS ARE OUT, AND THE CRYSTALS ARE SINGIN' THEIR LOUDEST.

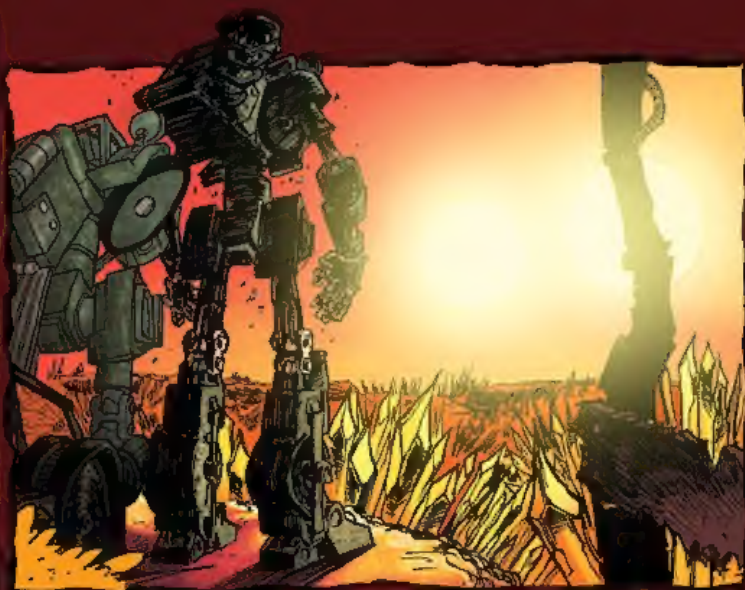
NEVER USED TO SHOW WHEN I WAS ONLINE BEFORE... ONLY WHEN I DRIFTED... ONLY AT NIGHT.

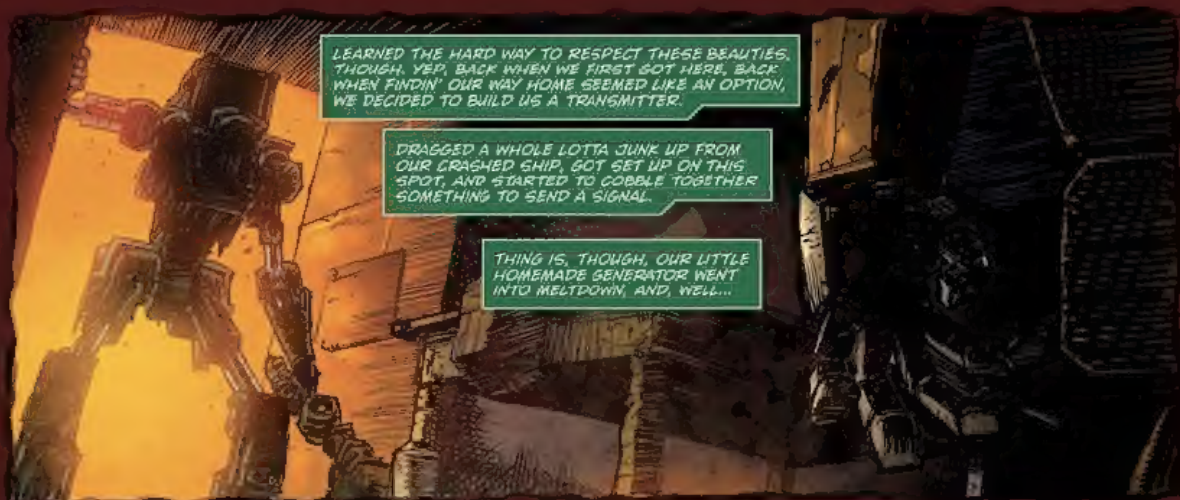
IT'S NOT NIGHTTIME, NOW. SO ENJOY THE LIGHT. ENJOY THE WAY THE SUNS' RAYS PLAY ON THE SKIN A' THESE LIVIN' GEMSTONES.

THE FEAR AND PARANOIA'S JUST LIFTIN' RIGHT OFFA' ME.

IT'S THIS PLACE, THIS WORLD, THESE CRYSTALS. I KNOW LIFE IS WORTH LIVIN' COS' THEY SING ME SO.

AND ONE DAY SOON, THEY'RE GONNA SING ME A SOLUTION TO ALL MY PROBLEMS.





LEARNED THE HARD WAY TO RESPECT THESE BEAUTIES, THOUGH. YEP, BACK WHEN WE FIRST GOT HERE, BACK WHEN FINDIN' OUR WAY HOME SEEMED LIKE AN OPTION, WE DECIDED TO BUILD US A TRANSMITTER.

DROGGED A WHOLE LOTTA JUNK UP FROM OUR CRASHED SHIP, GOT SET UP ON THIS SPOT, AND STARTED TO COBBLE TOGETHER SOMETHING TO SEND A SIGNAL.

THING IS, THOUGH, OUR LITTLE HOMEMADE GENERATOR WENT INTO MELTDOWN, AND, WELL...



...THAT'S HOW WE NEARLY LOST OL' OUTBACK.



THAT SHOWED ME TO RESPECT THE CRYSTALS' POWER. I CAN TELL YA, TAUGHT ME THE HARD WAY. THAT BLASTERS AN' ENERGY WEAPONS JUST CAN'T BE USED IN THIS PLACE...

THAT'S RIGHT, BUDDY, SUN'S'RE DROPPIN' FAST NOW.



HA! YEAH, GOOD ONE, BUDDY!

...NO MATTER WHAT THIS PLANET THROWS AT ME COME NIGHTTIME.



HE'S A GOOD KID, THAT OUTBACK. ALWAYS WILLING TO GIVE A HAND.



GOOD OL' OUTBACK.

THESE ARE ALL TOO REAL

IT'S NEVER A SURPRISE,
BUT IT'S ALWAYS A SHOCK.

KUP.

KUP.

KUP.

KUP.

I'M NUMB. TOO TIRED TO REGISTER.

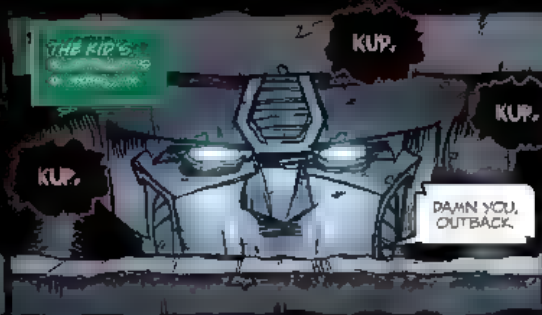
WHY? THEY LEAVE ME ALONE?

CAN'T THEY LEAVE ME ALONE?

NO, NOT SO DAMN
WANT TO FOCUS...

OUT.
OUTBACK! DO
SOMETHING!

WHY WON'T
YOU DO
SOMETHING?!



THE KID'S
ON HIS OWN

KUP.

KUP.

KUP.

DAMN YOU,
OUTBACK.

THEY NEVER COME IN
NEVER EVEN TRY

THEY NEVER COME IN
NEVER EVEN TRY
MY NAME WITH THEM LITERALLY OF IT



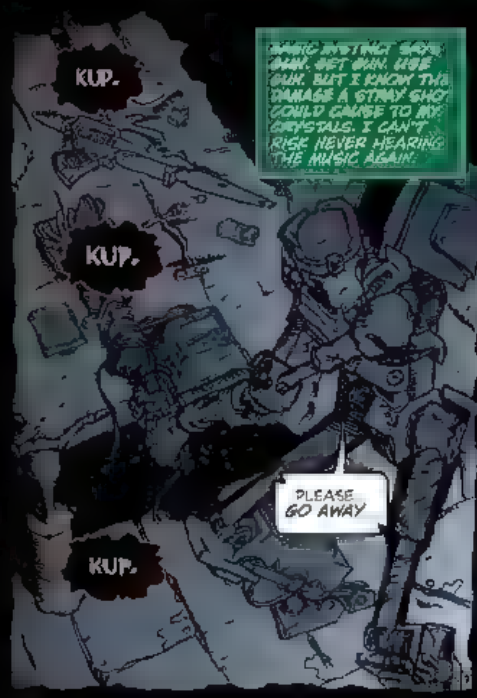
KUP.

KUP.

KUP.

THEY NEVER COME IN
NEVER EVEN TRY

THEY NEVER COME IN
NEVER EVEN TRY
MY NAME WITH THEM LITERALLY OF IT



KUP.

KUP.

KUP.

MY INSTINCTS SAY
DAMN, SET GUN, USE
GUN. BUT I KNOW THE
DAMAGE A STRAY SHOT
COULD CAUSE TO MY
CRYSTALS. I CAN'T
RISK NEVER HEARING
THE MUSIC AGAIN.

PLEASE
GO AWAY



THEY NEVER COME IN
NEVER EVEN TRY
MY NAME WITH THEM LITERALLY OF IT

KUP.

KUP.

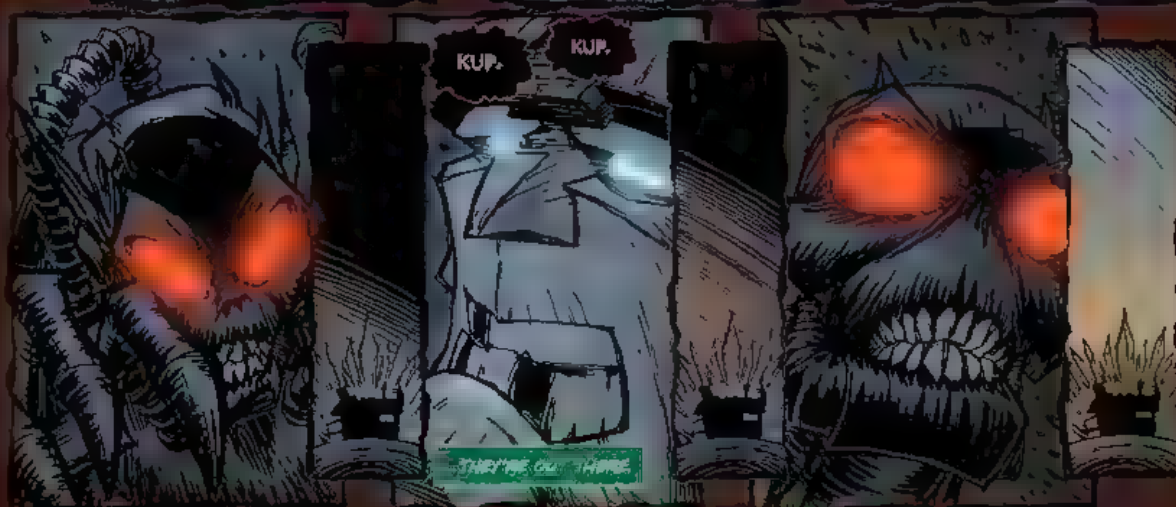
GO AWAY...

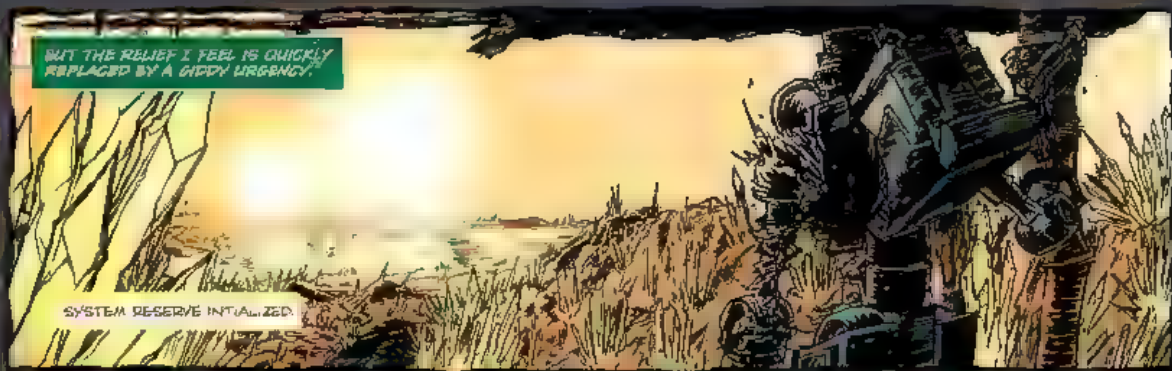
KUP.

GO...

AWAY!

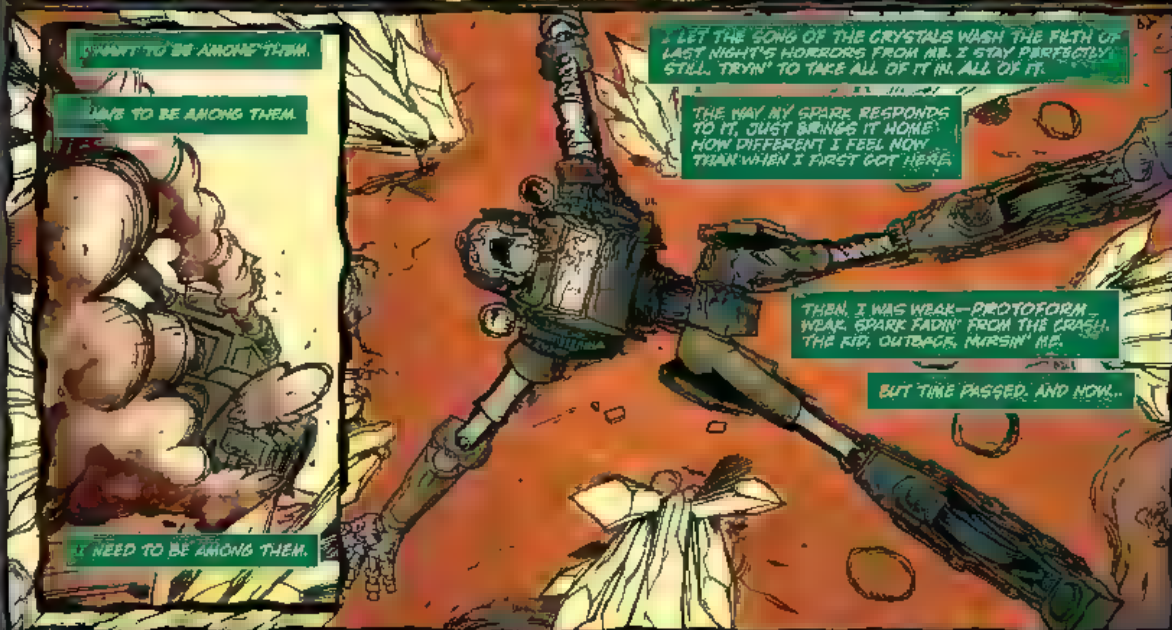
THEY NEVER COME IN
NEVER EVEN TRY
MY NAME WITH THEM LITERALLY OF IT





BUT THE RELIEF I FEEL IS QUICKLY REPLACED BY A GIDDY URGENCY.

SYSTEM RESERVE INITIALIZED.



I WANT TO BE AMONG THEM.

I WANT TO BE AMONG THEM.

I NEED TO BE AMONG THEM.

I LET THE SONG OF THE CRYSTALS WASH THE FILTH OF LAST NIGHT'S HORRORS FROM ME. I STAY PERFECTLY STILL, TRYIN' TO TAKE ALL OF IT IN. ALL OF IT.

THE WAY MY SPARK RESPONDS TO IT, JUST BRINGS IT HOME. HOW DIFFERENT I FEEL NOW THAN WHEN I FIRST GOT HERE.

THEN, I WAS WEAK—PROTOFORM. WEAK SPARK FADIN' FROM THE CRASH. THE KID, OUTRAGE, MURKIN' ME.

BUT TIME PASSED, AND NOW...



NOW I'M AWARE OF EVERY PULSIN' ATOM OF MY ANCIENT SPARK. EVERY FIBRILLATING SURGE SENDS ME SOMEPLACE BETWEEN BEIN' SHARP AND VITAL, AND BEIN' WASHED OVER WITH BLISS.

I'D DO ANYTHING TO FEEL LIKE THIS ALL THE TIME. ANYTHING.



SUNS IN THE SKY, SONG THROUGH MY SOUL. BUT WHAT CAN AN OLD MECH DO TO KEEP THE SUN FROM SETTING? TELL ME.

TELL ME.

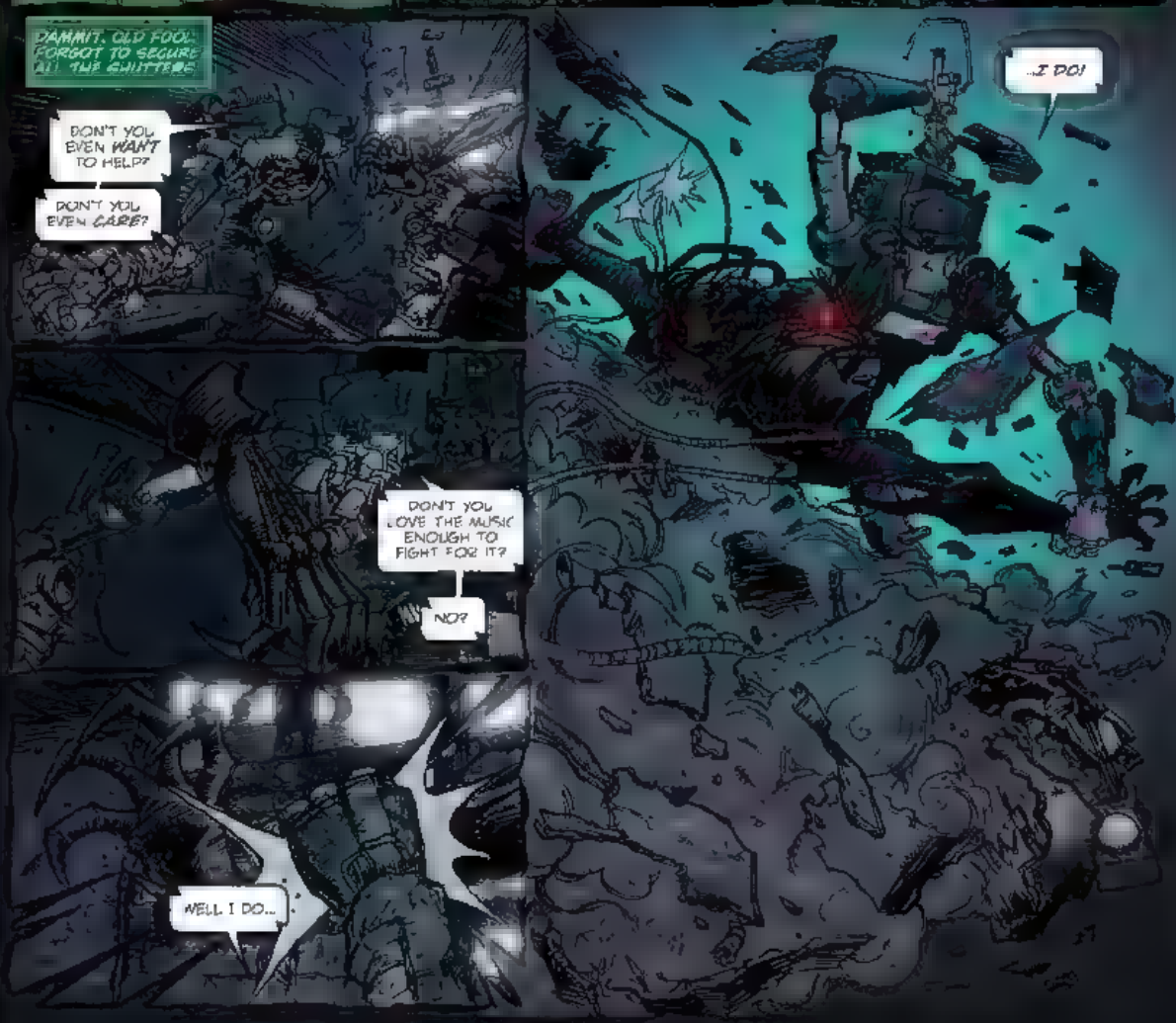
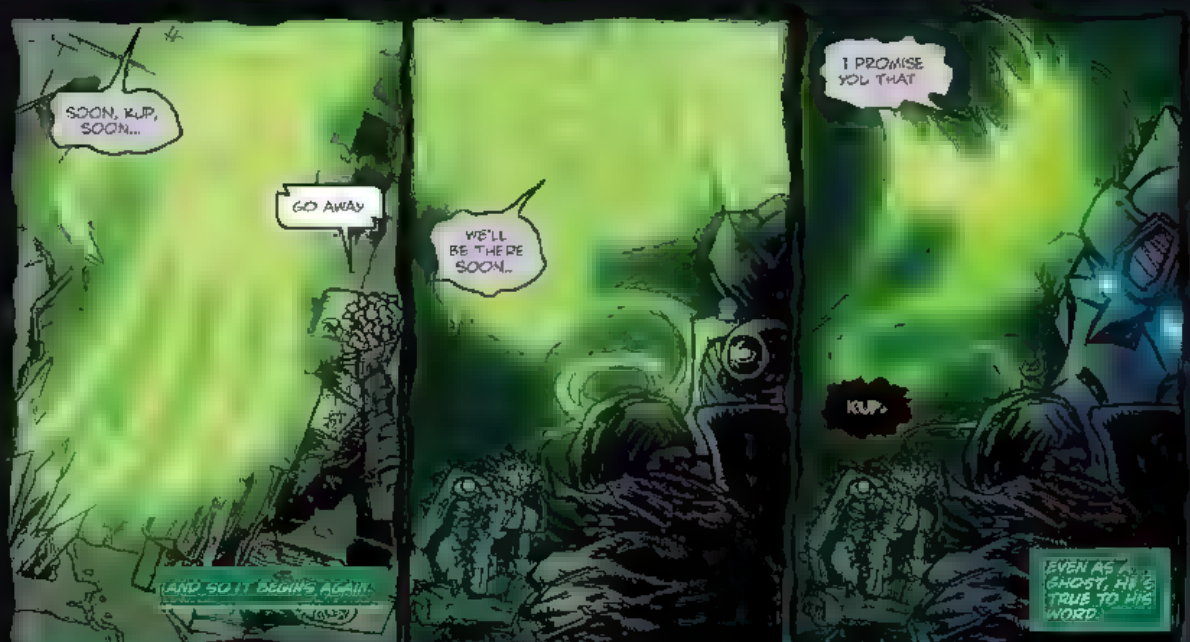


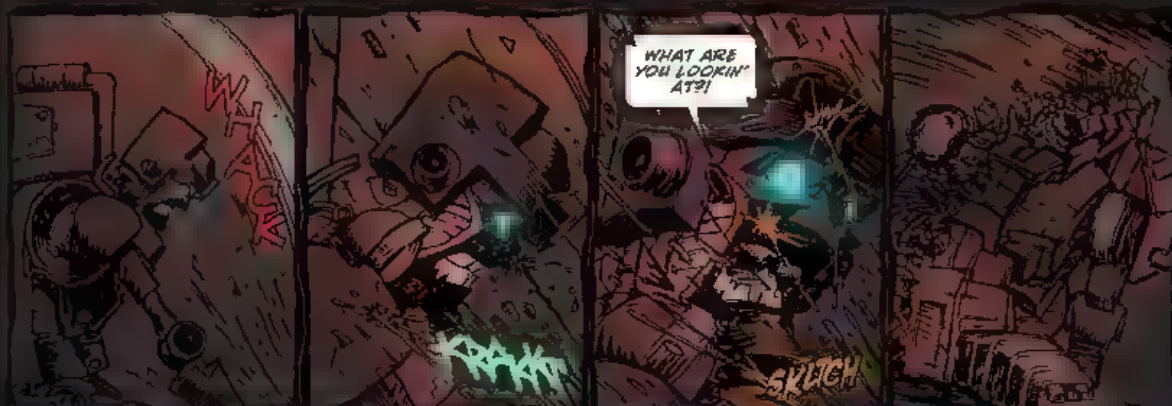
I WON'T LET THEM TAKE THIS AWAY FROM ME.



TELL ME.

EASY TO REMEMBER, EVEN FOR ME.





WHAT ARE
YOU LOOKIN'
AT?!



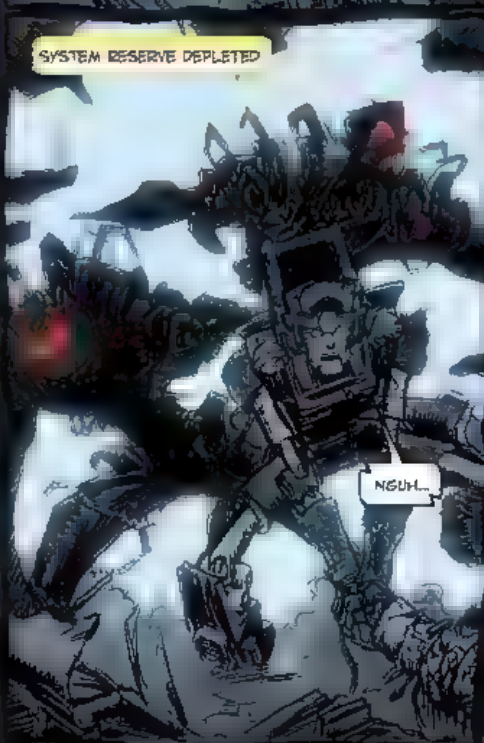
INSIDE.

YOU THINK YOU
CAN BE HERE?
YOU THINK I'LL
ALLOW THIS TO
HAPPEN IN MY
HOUSE?

INSIDE.



IN MY
HOUSE?!



SYSTEM RESERVE DEPLETED

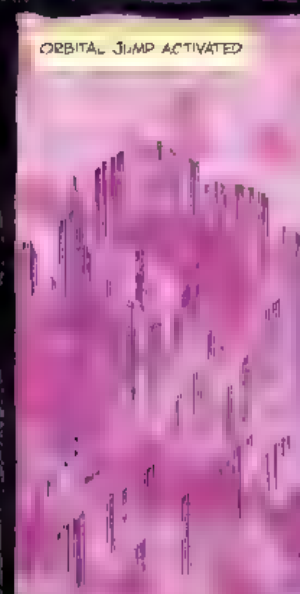
NGUH...

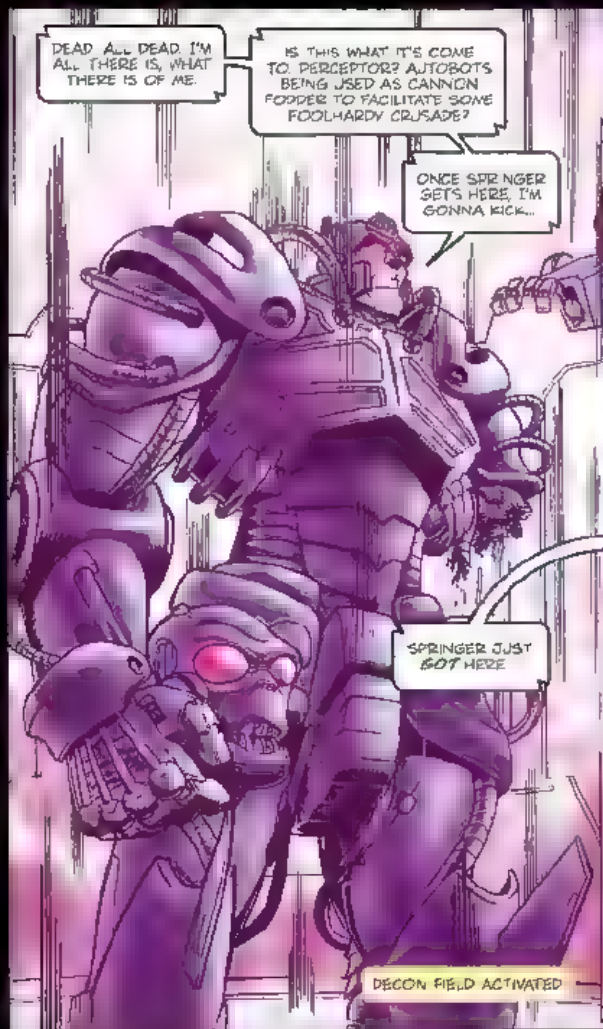


I DON'T KNOW WHERE THE
STRENGTH COMES FROM!



I DON'T KNOW WHERE THE
STRENGTH COMES FROM!





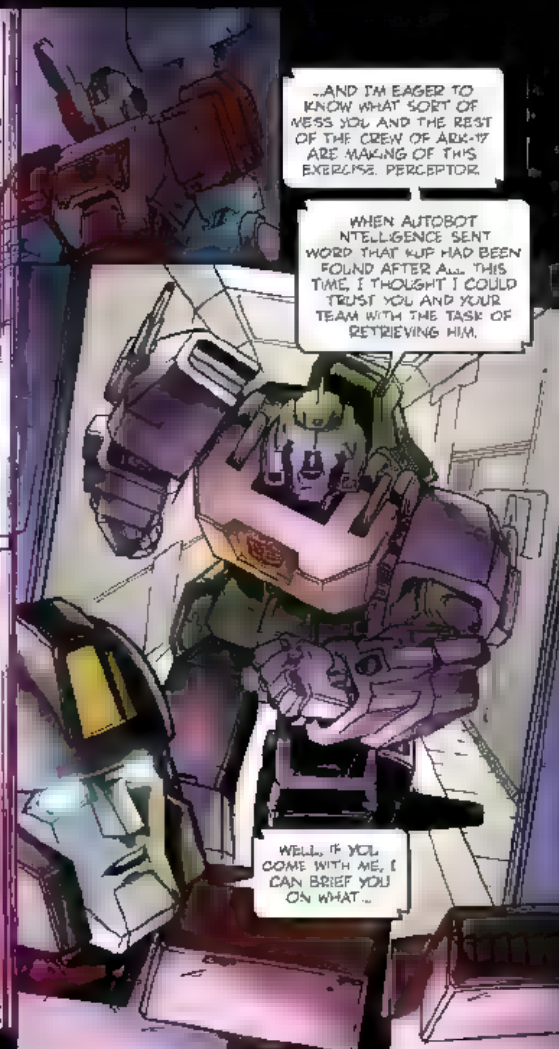
DEAD. ALL DEAD. I'M ALL THERE IS, WHAT THERE IS OF ME.

IS THIS WHAT IT'S COME TO, PERCEPTOR? AUTOBOTS BEING USED AS CANNON FODDER TO FACILITATE SOME FOOLHARDY CRUSADE?

ONCE SPRINGER GETS HERE, I'M GONNA KICK...

SPRINGER JUST GOT HERE

DECON FIELD ACTIVATED



...AND I'M EAGER TO KNOW WHAT SORT OF NESS YOU AND THE REST OF THE CREW OF ARK-17 ARE MAKING OF THIS EXERCISE, PERCEPTOR.

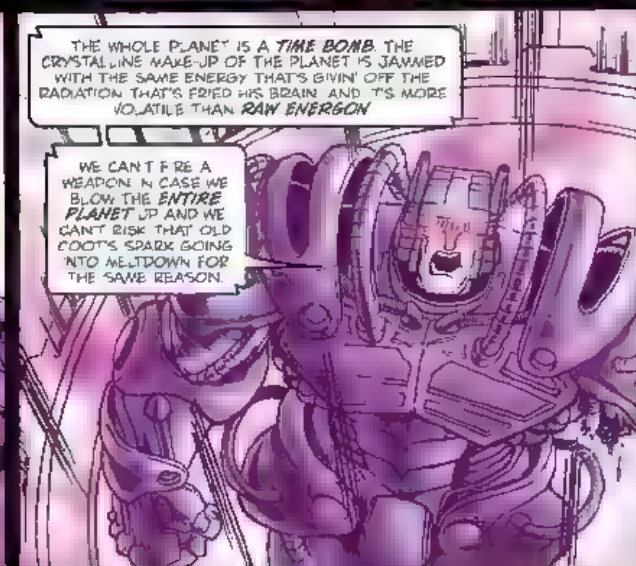
WHEN AUTOBOT INTELLIGENCE SENT WORD THAT KUP HAD BEEN FOUND AFTER ALL... THIS TIME, I THOUGHT I COULD TRUST YOU AND YOUR TEAM WITH THE TASK OF RETRIEVING HIM.

WELL, IF YOU COME WITH ME, I CAN BRIEF YOU ON WHAT...



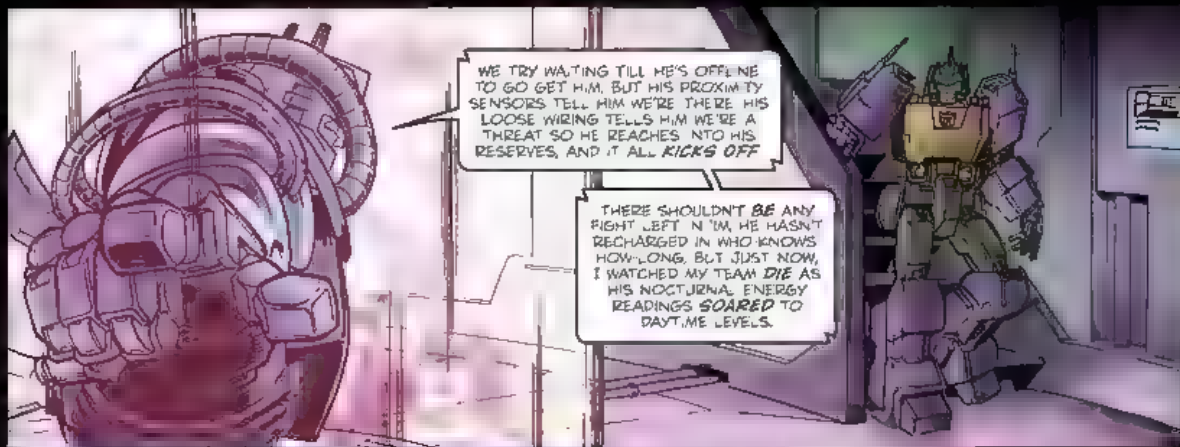
BRIEF YOU?

OH, ALLOW ME.



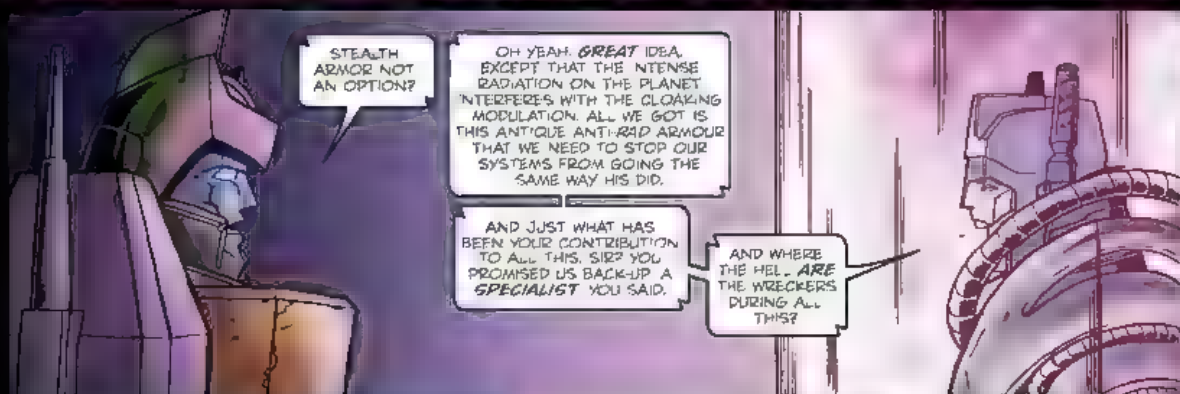
THE WHOLE PLANET IS A **TIME BOMB**. THE CRYSTALLINE MAKE-UP OF THE PLANET IS JAWMED WITH THE SAME ENERGY THAT'S GIVIN' OFF THE RADIATION THAT'S FRIED HIS BRAIN AND IT'S MORE VOLATILE THAN **RAW ENERGON**.

WE CAN'T FIRE A WEAPON IN CASE WE BLOW THE **ENTIRE PLANET** UP AND WE CAN'T RISK THAT OLD FOOT'S SPARK GOING INTO MELTDOWN FOR THE SAME REASON.



WE TRY WAITING TILL HE'S OFFENE TO GO GET HIM, BUT HIS PROXIMITY SENSORS TELL HIM WE'RE THERE HIS LOOSE WIRING TELLS HIM WE'RE A THREAT SO HE REACHES INTO HIS RESERVES, AND IT ALL KICKS OFF

THERE SHOULDN'T BE ANY FIGHT LEFT IN 'IM. HE HASN'T RECHARGED IN WHO KNOWS HOW LONG, BUT JUST NOW, I WATCHED MY TEAM DIE AS HIS NOCTURNA ENERGY READINGS SOARED TO DAYTIME LEVELS.

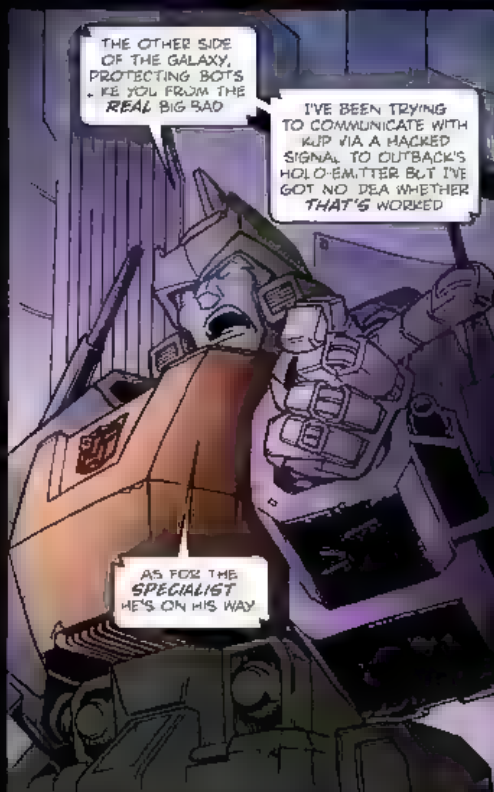


STEALTH ARMOR NOT AN OPTION?

OH YEAH. GREAT IDEA, EXCEPT THAT THE INTENSE RADIATION ON THE PLANET INTERFERES WITH THE CLOAKING MODULATION. ALL WE GOT IS THIS ANTIQUE ANTI-RAD ARMOUR THAT WE NEED TO STOP OUR SYSTEMS FROM GOING THE SAME WAY HIS DID.

AND JUST WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO ALL THIS, SIEP YOU PROMISED US BACK-UP A SPECIALIST YOU SAID.

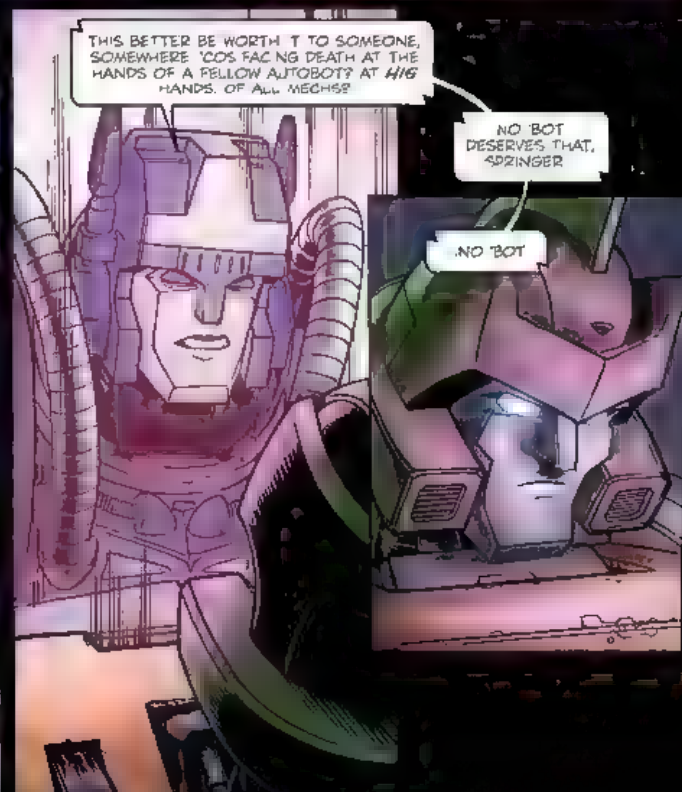
AND WHERE THE HELL ARE THE WRECKERS DURING ALL THIS?



THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GALAXY, PROTECTING BOTS MAKE YOU FROM THE REAL BIG BAD

I'VE BEEN TRYING TO COMMUNICATE WITH KUP VIA A HACKED SIGNAL TO OUTBACK'S HOLO-EMITTER BUT I'VE GOT NO IDEA WHETHER THAT'S WORKED

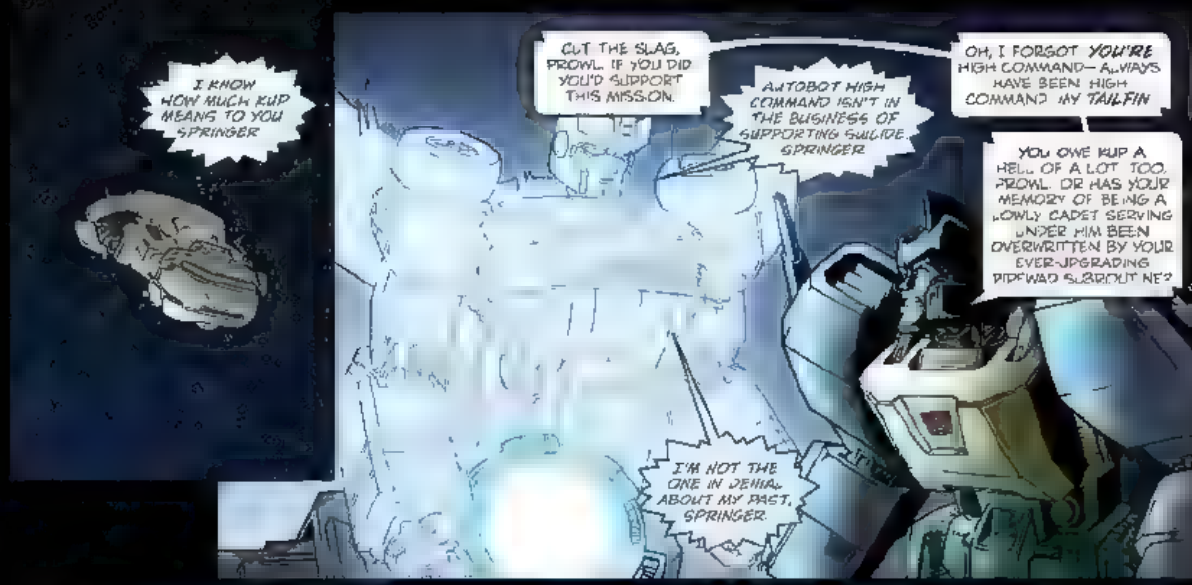
AS FOR THE SPECIALIST HE'S ON HIS WAY



THIS BETTER BE WORTH IT TO SOMEONE, SOMEWHERE 'COS FACING DEATH AT THE HANDS OF A FELLOW AUTOBOT? AT HIS HANDS. OF ALL MECHS?

NO BOT DESERVES THAT, SPRINGER

NO BOT



I KNOW
HOW MUCH KUP
MEANS TO YOU
SPRINGER

CUT THE SLAG,
PROWL IF YOU DID
YOU'D SUPPORT
THIS MISSION.

AUTOBOT HIGH
COMMAND ISN'T IN
THE BUSINESS OF
SUPPORTING SUICIDE
SPRINGER

OH, I FORGOT **YOU'RE**
HIGH COMMAND—ALWAYS
HAVE BEEN HIGH
COMMAND MY **TAILFIN**

YOU OWE KUP A
HELL OF A LOT TOO.
PROWL OR HAS YOUR
MEMORY OF BEING A
LOWLY CADET SERVING
UNDER HIM BEEN
OVERWRITTEN BY YOUR
EVER-UPGRADING
DIDFWD SUBROUTINE?

I'M NOT THE
ONE IN DENIAL
ABOUT MY PAST,
SPRINGER



THAT...
THAT'S NOT
THE ISSUE
HERE...

CORRECT
THE ISSUE IS THIS
CEASELESS FOLLY YOU
LABEL A RESCUE
MISSION.

WHY ARE
YOU SO HELLBENT
ON RETRIEVING AN
AUTOBOT WHOSE
CEREBRAL PROCESSORS
HAVE ROTTEN AWAY FROM
RADIATION POISONING,
AND WHOSE BODY IS A
SHAMBLING RELIC OF
UNREPAIRABLE
INCOMPATIBLE
JUNK?

HE'S LIVED
HIS LIFE
SPRINGER LET
HIM GO.

NO! HE MEANS
TOO MUCH!

TO YOU,
MAYBE.

YOU SPARKLESS
SPAWN OF A GLITCH
NOT JUST TO ME, TO
EVERY AUTOBOT

THE SAME
AUTOBOTS WHO
HAVE DIED NEEDLESSLY
AT HIS HANDS? COME
ON, SPRINGER, I'VE
TURNED A BLIND EYE
LONG ENOUGH.

IT'S ALL I CAN
DO TO PREVENT
OPTIMUS PRIME FROM
LEARNING ABOUT THIS.
HE'D NEVER APPROVE
SUCH A MISSION.



IF YOU BELIEVED THAT
FOR A NANO-SECOND,
PROWL YOU'D HAVE
SQUEALED ALREADY

BUT WE BOTH KNOW
THAT IF YOU DID THAT,
HE'D BE ON THAT
PLANET RIGHT NOW
WITHOUT A PLATE OF
ANT-RAD ARMOR
ON HIM, DOING
EVERYTHING TO BRING
KUP HOME, RIGHT?

RIGHT?



VERY WELL, SPRINGER. I SHALL LEAVE MATTERS IN YOUR CAPABLE HANDS. IF YOU CAN JUSTIFY AND ACCEPT THE LOST LOSS OF RESOURCES AND LIFE, ON YOUR OWN HEAD BE IT.

BUT I THINK YOU KNOW THIS CAN'T CONTINUE. RIGHT NOW THE TALENTS OF THE LEADER OF THE WRECKERS COULD BE PUT TO MORE FRUITFUL USE WITH HIS TEAM.

THAT WOULD REALLY BE SERVING YOUR FELLOW AUTOBOTS.

PROWL OUT



SPRINGER, I'M AFRAID PROWL'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCENARIO IS CORRECT.

LOOK, I KNOW, ALRIGHT? BUT IT'S NOT JUST ME THAT KUP'S TRAINED UP. THERE'S SIDESWIPES AND SUNSTREAKER. HOT ROD PRIME HIMSELF, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!

THIS IS FOR THEM, TOO. WE THE AUTOBOTS WE OWE IT TO HIM.



I UNDERSTAND, SPRINGER. BUT PERHAPS WHAT YOU OWE TO KUP IS TO STAY TRUE TO THE DEALS AND VALUES HE IMPARTED TO YOU ALL.

A DOGGED BELIEF IN NEVER GIVING UP MAY BE A VIRTUE HE EXTOLLED. BUT AT THE COST OF YOUR COMRADES LIVES? WHAT WOULD HE THINK OF ALL THIS?

SPRINGER

HMP



HE'S HERE. SPRINGER'S SHIP DOCKED A DEMI-CYCLE AGO.

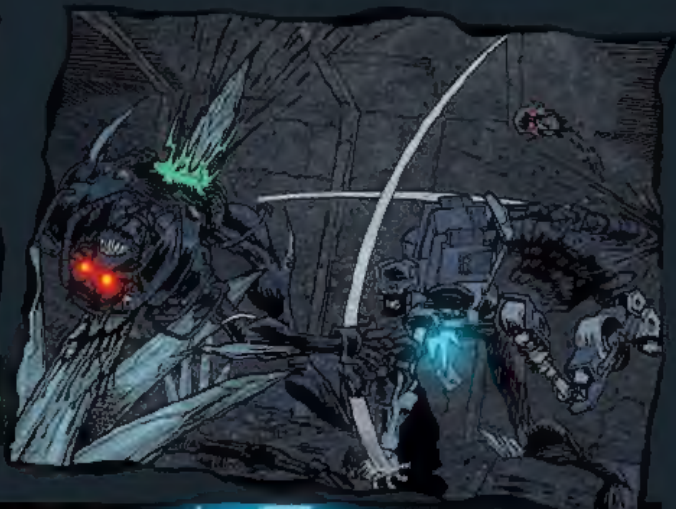
YES! YESS!

WHAT? WHAT'S IT?



BACK-UP





HHHHHHH...

MY SPARK IS PURE, AND THESE MONSTERS HATE ME FOR IT.

I YEARN FOR THE SUN'S RAYS...

...BUT IT'D BE NO USE. I'LL HEAR THEIR SONG NO MORE.

NUH—NO...

SYSTEM RESERVE DEPLETED.

SPARKCORE MELTDOWN IMMINENT.



INITIALIZING EMERGENCY SPARKCORE STABILIZERS.

CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE.



THE LIGHT INSIDE ME SCARES THEM. GOOD.

WHILE THEY COWER, I MAKE GOOD MY ESCAPE.



SCREW IT. IF I'M TO BE DRIVEN OUT...

...IT'LL BE THROUGH MY OWN FRONT...



HEY.

CAN I BORROW
A QUART OF
ENER-JUICE?

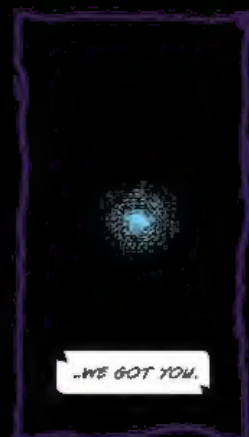
WHAT THE—?

TRAILBREAKERAAAAGHK—

SPARKCORE STABILIZER FAILURE



WHAMP



A2K-17

...IT WAS ACTUALLY RATHER STRAIGHTFORWARD—EXTEND A LOCALIZED FIELD AROUND HIS CRASHING SPARK... NO DEAD KUP, NO PLANET-WIDE CHAIN REACTION.

I GUESS IT SOUNDS EASY WHEN YOU PUT IT THAT WAY...

WELL, I OWE YOU, TRAILBREAKER, YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE THAT COULDA DONE IT. JUST WISH I'D WAITED FOR YOU TO BE FREE FROM YOUR DUTIES *BEFORE* I PUSHED FOR THIS MISSION TO GO AHEAD.

SPRINGER...

IDIOT. LETTING MY FEELINGS GET IN THE WAY.

HE'S THE ONLY AUTOBOT I'D DO THIS FOR. LAY IT ALL ON THE LINE, JUST TO GO *GONE* WAY TO REPAYING HIM.

AND HIS CURRENT CONDITION?

WELL, HE'S BEEN FITTED WITH A PLACEHOLDER POWERCORE, JUST TO MAINTAIN HIS SPARK.

BUT WITH HIS CONSIDERABLE *AGE* AND HIS STUBBORNNESS TO UPGRADE OVER THE YEARS, MOST OF HIS MECHANISMS ARE INCOMPATIBLE WITH MODERN TRANSFORMER TECH.

AND HIS MIND?

THAT MAY NEVER HEAL.

LOOK, I'M NOT JUDGING, SPRINGER.

NO, BUT EVERYONE ELSE WILL. AND SO WILL HISTORY, I GUESS. AND WHAT WOULD HE THINK IF HE KNEW WHAT I SANCTIONED JUST TO GET HIM BACK, IN *THIS* STATE?

LOOK AT HIM. TRAPPED—MIND, BODY AND SOUL...

"...WAS IT WORTH IT?"

THE END?